



MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 19-5

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To: Eligibility Services – Regional Directors
Program Managers
Eligibility Services Supervisors
Regional Attorneys
Hearings Officers

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Subject: 1. Death Policy and Process Improvements
2. Disqualifying an Individual for Not Clearing a Social Security Number (SSN) Discrepancy
3. Verifying Good Cause for Non-cooperation with Child and Medical Support Requirements
4. Homeless Shelter Standard Deduction Update

Bulletins are sent to supervisors and other regional managers. Supervisors must share this information with all eligibility staff. Please ensure that copies are provided to staff that do not have access to e-mail. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins>;
- [Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Handbook \(MEPDH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/medicaid-elderly-and-people-disabilities-handbook/mepd-policy-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/medicaid-elderly-and-people-disabilities-handbook/mepd-policy-bulletins>.

1. Death Policy and Process Improvements

Background

In November 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an audit and submitted a final report titled, *Texas Managed Care Organizations Received Medicaid Capitation Payments After Beneficiary's Death*.

The findings of the report require the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to strengthen its policies and procedures for identifying deceased beneficiaries, denying Medicaid benefits, and ending eligibility and enrollment to prevent future unallowable payments. Based on the findings, enhancements were made to Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) to ensure death matches are processed accurately.

Current Policy

All Programs

HHSC receives reports from the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS), the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), and DADS interface of persons who are reported to be deceased.

Death match reports are sent to TIERS and the following alert tasks are created:

- Alert 755, *CMS Reports Individual is Deceased as of MM/DD/YYYY, Please Verify*, (SSI Recipients);
- Alert 759, *CMS Reports Individual is Deceased as of MM/DD/YYYY, Please Verify*, (Non-SSI Recipients);
- Alert 810, *Process a Date of Death with a Perfect Match*;
- Alert 811, *Process a Date of Death with a Non-Perfect Match*;
- Alert 812, *Verify Discrepancy in Date of Death for Individual*; or
- DADS Death Change Task, *Change for a (TOA) case*.

Currently, policy does not provide for what verification sources must be used to confirm date of death (DOD) when resolving a discrepancy as a result of death match reports.

New Policy

All Programs

Death match information will continue to be received from SSA, BVS, CMS, and DADS interface; however, the match criteria to process these reports and additional automation in TIERS has been updated to increase accuracy and reduce manual staff processing.

In addition, when verification of DOD is required to process a death alert or clear a discrepancy between the death match and TIERS, staff must use BVS as the verification source.

If the BVS verification is not available, staff must verify the DOD using two of the following:

- SSA or SOLQ;
- Statement from guardian or other authorized representative;
- Copy of death certificate;
- Newspaper death notice (obituary);
- Statement from a relative or household member;
- Statement from funeral director; or
- Records from hospital or other institution where the person died.

With the exception of Alert 811, when staff pend to verify the DOD information or to clear a discrepancy, and the household does not provide the requested information, staff **must** enter the DOD in TIERS that was provided by the alert task. Use the denial reason Due to Being Deceased and not Failure to Provide Missing Information.

For Alert 811, when staff pend the household to verify the biographical information to verify that the person is the correct person reported on the death report and the household does not provide the requested information, staff **must not** enter the date of death in TIERS. Staff must request a Second Level Review (SLR) to deny the person for failure to provide missing information instead of being deceased.

Staff must continue to follow current policies and procedures when pending a household for verification. (TWH, B-634; MEPDH, B-6420)

In addition, a new Data Mart report, DG056, *Deceased Individuals Report*, is available which monitors and tracks all death alerts.

Automation

Changes to TIERS are effective with the implementation of TIERS Release 104 on April 13, 2019.

Effective Date

The policy is effective with the implementation of TIERS Release 104 on April 13, 2019.

Handbook

The Texas Works Handbook updates are scheduled for the October 2019 revision.

The MEPD Handbook updates are scheduled for the September 2019 revision.

In addition, the Change and Alert Guide updates are scheduled for April of 2019 to include the new alerts captured in this bulletin.

Training

Training to be provided in the web-based training portal titled *Death Policy and Process Improvements* on April 4, 2019. A training broadcast will be sent with further details.

2. Disqualifying an Individual for Not Clearing a Social Security Number (SSN) Discrepancy

Background

Texas Works Bulletin #17-15 and MEPD #17-10, Social Security Number Validation, issued on October 3, 2017, provided instructions to staff regarding the State Online Query (SOLQ) validation process.

Federal regulations do not allow delaying or denying the certification of a person otherwise eligible for benefits by pending verification of the person's SSN from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

This bulletin revises the policies and processes for case actions in which staff are unable to verify an SSN via SOLQ.

Current Policy

[All Programs](#)

Staff have the ability to verify a person's SSN through SOLQ at application, during a change, and at recertification.

When a person's SSN is verified via SOLQ, but information provided by the SSA indicates that the person is deceased (code X) or that the name does not match (code F), the person's identity is questionable. Staff must clear the discrepancy prior to disposing the case action. If the person does not provide the information, staff must take action to either deny or disqualify the person.

When a person's SSN is not verified via SOLQ, staff review information on the application or other supporting documents and update any information entered incorrectly. After making corrections, staff manually invoke SOLQ to re-run the verification process.

- If the SSN remains unverified, attempt to telephone the household to clear the discrepancy.
- If unable to clear the discrepancy by phone, send Form H1020, Request for Information or Action, requesting the necessary information.
- If the household does not respond to the request, follow policy in TWH A-420, Failure to Comply, or MEPD Bulletin #14-02, #2, Social Security Number (SSN) Verification, to either disqualify or deny the person.

New Policy

All Programs

Policy is not changing for persons whose SSN is verified via SOLQ, but SSA information indicates that the person is deceased or that their name does not match.

When a person's SSN is not verified via SOLQ, staff continue to review information on the application and supporting documents and update any information entered incorrectly and manually invoke SOLQ to re-run the verification process.

If the person's identity is not questionable and the SSN remains unverified after re-running the SOLQ verification process, continue to attempt to contact the household by phone to clear the SSN discrepancy. If unable to clear the discrepancy by phone and:

- No other information is required to determine eligibility, certify the person if all other eligibility requirements are met.
- Other information is required to determine eligibility, request information to clear the SSN discrepancy on Form H1020.
 - Staff must manually generate the Form H1020 and attach the Form H-RG83, *SSN Maintenance Memorandum*, before mailing.

If the household:

- Returns all information and staff are able to validate the SSN, certify the person if all other eligibility requirements are met.
- Returns information, but staff are unable to validate the SSN with the information provided, certify the person if all other eligibility requirements are met.
- Returns information, but not the information to clear the discrepancy, certify the person if all other eligibility criteria are met.
- Does not return the other verification, staff deny the individual.

However, if the person's identity is questionable, request information to clear the discrepancy. If the information is not provided or does not clear the discrepancy, deny or disqualify the individual.

If a person's SSN is not verified via SOLQ and the monthly SSA interface does not validate the SSN, Alert 268, *Social Security Administration Unable to Verify SSN (RG-83)*, or Alert 269, *Social Security Administration Reports a Duplicate SSN*, are generated to address the discrepancy. Follow current policies and procedures to clear the discrepancy. (TWH A-432, SSN Discrepancy Clearance Procedures and Changes and Change and Alert Guide)

Automation

Automation changes are not required.

Forms

Form RG-83, *SSN Maintenance Memorandum*, has been updated and re-numbered to Form H-RG83. The revised form is updated in the TWH and MEPDH and will be available in TIERS.

Effective Date

The policy is effective with the implementation of TIERS Release 104 on April 13, 2019.

Handbook

The Texas Works Handbook updates are scheduled for the October 2019 revision.

The MEPD Handbook updates are scheduled for the September 2019 revision.

Training

No training is required.

3. Verifying Good Cause for Non-cooperation with Child and Medical Support Requirements

Background

HHSC is updating the TIERS interface files to more efficiently communicate with the Office of Attorney General's (OAG) new automation system currently being developed. Part of the system updates include modifying TIERS to streamline the good cause verification process.

Current Policy

[Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\) and Parent and Caretaker Relatives Medicaid \(TP 08\)](#)

Parents and caretakers receiving TANF and TP 08 must comply with the OAG child and medical support requirements, unless they have a good cause due to family violence, rape, incest, or pending adoption. HHSC staff explore good cause for not complying with child or medical support requirements at application and redetermination.

When a person wants to claim good cause for not complying with child or medical support requirements and verification is needed:

- Indicate in TIERS on the **Absent Parent— Details** page that the good cause claim is **Pending Documentation**.
- Pend for good cause verification by manually generating Form H1020 and including the Form H1713, *Service Plan for Family Violence Option and Report of Good Cause*, if the good cause claim is related to family violence.
- Manually enter case information and the applicable family violence specialist referral contact information on Form H1713. Currently, Form H1713 may be generated through TIERS but populates only one family violence center location for all areas of the state.

Alert 853, *Good Cause Pending on the Absent Parent Page*, is created to follow-up on good cause if the claim is left as **Pending Documentation** in TIERS for 20 calendar days following the disposition of the EDG.

If good cause verification is received, update the good cause status to **Upheld** on the **Absent Parent—Details** page. TIERS then sends a response to the OAG through the automated interface file indicating the good cause exemption has been granted.

New Policy

TANF and TP 08

Staff must continue to follow current policy in exploring good cause for not cooperating with OAG's child or medical support requirements at application and redetermination.

Updates have been made in TIERS to capture and pend for good cause related to child and medical support on the new **Good Cause— Details** page available in the **Absent Parent** LUW. Staff no longer need to manually pend the EDG for good cause verification when a person wishes to claim good cause for not cooperating with OAG.

When a person wants to claim good cause for not complying with child or medical support requirements and verification is needed:

- Pend the EDG in TIERS by selecting **Good Cause Status** as **Claimed** on the new **Good Cause— Details** page available in the **Absent Parent** LUW.
- The **Verification** field will display **Not Verified**.
- For good cause claims related to family violence, the **Good Cause— Details** page also contains functionality to search for the nearest family violence shelter based on preferred location. The selected information will be pre-populated on Form H1713.
- TIERS will generate Form H1020 and Form H1713, if applicable.

If good cause verification is not provided by the due date, then staff must continue to process the EDG without allowing good cause. A child support referral will be generated through the automated interface to OAG when the EDG is disposed or if good cause is not provided by the due date. **Do not** deny the EDG for failure to provide the good cause verification.

If good cause verification is received after the due date, then staff must update the **Good Cause Status** field on the **Good Cause— Details** page to **Upheld** and select the appropriate verification value from the **Verification** field. A notification will be sent to the OAG through the automated interface indicating a good cause claim has been upheld.

Note: Good cause is not a condition of eligibility and can be reported at any time.

Automation

Changes to TIERS will be implemented on April 13, 2019 with Release 104. Additionally, Alert 853 will be retired.

Forms

Minor edits have been made to Form H1713 for clarity. The revised H1713 will be updated in the TWH and TIERS.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the implementation of TIERS Release 104 on April 13, 2019.

Handbook

The Texas Works Handbook updates are scheduled for the October 2019 revision.

Training

Training will be required. A training broadcast will be sent with further details.

4. Homeless Shelter Standard Deduction Update

Background

On February 8, 2019, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) issued a memo requiring states to adjust the homeless shelter standard deduction in accordance with the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). FNS intends to adjust the homeless shelter standard annually for inflation and include any updated homeless shelter standard amounts with the SNAP Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) effective each October.

Current Policy

SNAP

As per TWH A-1427, Homeless Shelter Standard, a homeless shelter standard deduction is allowed for households which:

- all members are homeless;
- have any amount of out-of-pocket shelter expenses; and
- do not wish to claim an excess shelter deduction.

The value of the homeless shelter standard deduction is \$143 as per TWH C-121.1, Deduction Amounts.

New Policy

SNAP

Effective with the April 2019 benefit month, the value of the homeless shelter standard deduction will increase from \$143 to \$147.55.

Automation

TIERS will update all active SNAP EDGs with the homeless shelter standard deduction amount with the implementation of TIERS Release 104 on April 13, 2019.

Effective Date

The policy is effective beginning with benefit month April 2019.

The updated homeless shelter standard deduction is budgeted in TIERS for benefit month April 2019 and ongoing.

Handbook

The Texas Works Handbook updates are scheduled for the July 2019 revision.

Training

Training is not required.